

The Enchanted Island: A Thematic Study

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Abstract

This paper is a study of the alterations Davenant and Dryden rendered on **The Tempest** in their adaptation of it entitled **The Enchanted Island**. These alterations include changes in plotting, theme, characters and characterization. In the adaptation, Shakespeare's optimism concerning the amelioration of the human soul recedes to the background, giving room to adaptors' advocacy of love and civility for the establishment of a stable society. Miranda's innocence is capitalized upon to suit the taste of the Restoration audience. Skeptic of the Elizabethan deeply rooted belief in necromancy and preternatural phenomena, the Restoration writers dull the effectiveness of the Shakespearean protagonist's magic. They, thus, put his efficiency as a reformer to question. Prospero's inability to control his world as in the original enables the adaptors to bring the play to the edge of tragedy, a genre which they, especially Dryden prefer to comedy. They, however, have to retain the happy ending of the play in order to please the 17-century theatre-goers who prefer comedy to tragedy.

Writing for an audience which took pride in wit and taste. Davenant and Dryden despite their didactic moral undertones, are cynical about Shakespeare's admiration of the purity of the country and the innocence of the country people. The contrast in the adaptation is between Prospero's natural island and the Restoration "TOWN", as much as it is between the natural Hippolito and the experienced and sophisticated Ferdinand. The Restoration Poet-Laureates show no interest in, rather laugh at, the natural man, who, for them, is no more than country bumpkin who should learn the ways of the world before he can be admitted to the civilized, urban society. The plays simultaneously implies a warning against immorality and excessive emotions, which may lead to anarchy and social disorder.

William Shakespeare's play, **The Tempest** (1661), was drastically but significantly altered at the hands of William Davenant and John Dryden in their adaptation of it entitled **The Tempest; or, The Enchanted Island** (1667)⁽¹⁾. The new version, says George Guffey, retains around thirty- one percent of the original Shakespearean text (Guffey, 1969 : Viii) Whatever degree of accuracy Guffey's calculation may have, it indicates that the changes rendered on the original were seriously drastic. These changes include alterations in plotting, theme, structure, characters and characterization. The adaptors underplay Shakespeare's theme of ameliorating the human soul and conduct, stressing the importance of civility and sophistication. Miranda's innocence is also utilized and capitalized upon to suit the taste of the seventeenth - century theatre - goers (Holland, 1959: 218). More importantly, Prospero's efficiency as a magician and thus as a manipulator of the plot and the other characters is put to question, reflecting the Restoration skepticism towards the Elizabethan magic and romance ⁽²⁾. As a result of the protagonist's inability to control his world as in the original, the Restoration playwrights are able to bring the dramatic action of **The Tempest** to the edge of tragedy, a genre which they, especially Dryden, prefer to comedy⁽³⁾. However, the new version, like the original ends happily despite all the tragic themes in it. Such ending is meant to suit the taste of the seventeenth - century theatre - goers, who, prefer comedy to tragedy.

These changes rendered by the two Restoration poet - laureates have aggravated many admirers of Shakespeare. Critics like Frederick Kilbourne, Lucyle Hook and George Odell come down heavily on the Davenant - Dryden version. Kilbourne (1910: 32) discards it as a ridiculous "Black literary crime". George C. Odell (1966:VOL1 P. 31) refers to it as "the worst perversion of Shakespeare in the two - century history of such atrocities. He also calls it(VOL 1 P.32) a "capital offense". . Hook (1953:VOL 4 P.289) describes it as an offensive work.

Nevertheless, a careful study of this and similar adaptations of Shakespeare in the seventeenth - century can enhance our understanding of the Restoration social, moral, aesthetic, intellectual and literary values and tradition. Allardyce Nicoll (1923:161) argues:

Probably nowhere better than in these adaptations can we find the key to the whole dramatic productivity of the period. Nowhere better can we find expressed the likes and dislikes of the time.

Among all the Shakespearean offshoots in the seventeenth century **The Enchanted Island** has attracted the attention of modern critics. Norman Holland (1959:219) considers it the most informative play about Restoration Comedy. "It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that it was the favorite play of the Restoration stage," says Montague Summers⁽⁴⁾. Indeed, in its operatic form (1674), this adaptation replaced the original master - piece till 1838 (Odell, 1966: 33). The intention of this research is to study the thematic and cultural significance of and the reasons behind the major alterations rendered on the original, hoping to come to conclusions about the dramatic concepts of Shakespeare and his Restoration counterparts. At this point a review of the Shakespearean origin is in order.

In **The Tempest**, Shakespeare demonstrates the possibility of ameliorating the human soul and re-arranging the energies of society. He, thus, arranges for a group of jaded, tainted and corrupt characters to be washed up on the shores of an island in the New World and there to be restored to spiritual health at the hands of his mystical redeemer, Prospero. Penitent and enlightened through the healing experiences they have undergone in the New World, these characters are led back to the Old World, where they can establish healthy relationships and a healthy government (AL - Abdullah, 1981). The action of the play is mainly woven around the workings of Prospero, who, through the aptitude of his magic and the assistance of a superintending aetherial servant, Ariel, succeeds in purging his adversaries of Machiavellian ambition and anti-Christian pride and self-centeredness. These three vices are those of Prospero's brother, Antonio, who conspired against Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, and sent him into exile. The play brings this heinous conspiracy into the lime-light by displaying a similarly vicious one in which Antonio talks Sebastian into murdering his brother, Alonso, in order to succeed the latter to the throne of Naples. Of course, this conspiracy proves abortive due to the full control of the "good" supernatural powers that guard Prospero's enchanted island.

In the comic subplot, Prospero's attentive aides thwart another conspiracy designed this time by Caliban, a semi-monster, against his egalitarian master, Prospero. Caliban's monstrous strife is a parody of the destructive aspiring efforts of Antonio and Sebastian.

Along with the purgation of the villainous antagonists, Shakespeare's reformer does not forget to reward the good characters. He expresses his gratitude to Gonzalo's past favors and promises to arrange for a morally and socially accepted marriage between his daughter, Miranda, and Ferdinand, Alonso's son. This promised marriage is probably Ferdinand's reward for his courage, truthfulness and filial loyalty.

The Shakespearean plot consists of three main ingredients: first, the Antonio-Alonso-Sebastian thread of the plot; second, the Ferdinand-Miranda part; and finally, the subplot devoted to Caliban and the drunken sailors. These three parts are integrated and are relevant to Shakespeare's main objectives, i.e. purging the aspiring characters of their villainous ambition and rewarding the righteous ones.

Shakespeare's warning against Machiavellian motivations and his optimism concerning the redemption of the human soul recede to the background, in the adaption, giving room to Davenant's warning against the dangers of lust and his advocacy of love and civility for the establishment of healthy interpersonal relationships in a harmonious society. The emphasis on this theme reflects the adaptors' and the Restoration belief that sex was the lowest common denominator among all people. (Holland, 1959 : 221) .

It will not take more than a quick survey of Restoration plays like **Love in a Tub**, **She would If She Could**, **Love in a Wood**, **The Country Wife**, **The Man Of Mode**, **The Plain Dealer**, **The Old Bachelor**, **The Double Dealer**, **Love For Love**, and **The Way Of The World**, to see the dominance of the theme of intersexual relationships in the Restoration "Town" society. Whereas the Elizabethan writers show interest in the struggle between good and evil forces in society and in the universe, the Restoration playwrights concern themselves with such topics as marriage, lust, tri-

angular man - woman relationships, and similar pertinent issues (Holland, 1959:210-13).

Within this context, the shift in theme and interest between Shakespeare's **Tempest** and its Restoration offshoot is thus significant but very natural. In the original, Shakespeare dramatizes a pattern in which a talented benevolent protagonist, not without providential support, can heal his malevolent antagonists, or at least eliminate their chances of upsetting the established order. In the adaptation, however, Davenant and Dryden, have their protagonist undergo an enlightening experience through which he evolves from the state of a lusty noble savage to that of a civilized lover. In the Restoration design love is constructive whereas lust is destructive. In his "preface to **Gondibert**," Davenant explains the Restoration concepts of love and lust:

.....indefinite love is lust, and Lust when it is determin'd to one is Love. (Spencer, 1965 : 21).

As for the benefits of Love and the dangers of lust, he contends that:

Love is the most acceptable imposition of Nature,
the cause and preservation of Life, and the very
healthfulness of the mind as well as the body,
but lust, our raging Fever, is more dangerous in
cities than the Calenture in ships. (Spencer, 1965 : 21)

To highlight the theme of Hippolito's cleansing of his collective lust for all women, the adaptors turn the shakespearean Ferdinand - Miranda Love relationship into an intrigue. This alteration is carried out by the retention and intensification of the roles of Ferdinand and Miranda and also by the introduction of a counterpair of utterly innocent lovers, Hippolito and Dorinda. The quadrangular interaction among them makes the major part of the adaptation. In order to meet their fascination with symmetry and equilibrium, the Restoration adaptors multiply their parallel characters; they furnish Ariel with an aetherial sweetheart, Milka, and Caliban with an ugly and monstrous sister⁽⁵⁾.

The innocence of Shakespeare's Miranda tremendously appeals to the adaptors. thus, they capitalize on this theme by introducing two more similar characters, Hippolito and Dorinda, who have no knowledge of such basic human instincts or desires as love, jealousy and sex. By separating his two daughters from Hippolito, Prospero has kept the trio as noble savages in a condition of ignorance about themselves and about each other. Not only has he kept each of them in the dark about the other sex, but has also warned them against the dangers that can entail from intersexual encounters. It is interesting, however, to see how Dorinda and Hippolito observe, approach, touch and feel one another instinctively, despite the frequent warnings of Prospero against such an encounter:

Hip: (seeing her) what thing is that?.....
I must go nearer it - but stay a while;
May it not be that beauteous Murderer, Woman,
Which I was charg'd to shun? Speak, what art thou?
Thou shining Vision!

Dor: Alas, I know not, but I'm told I am a Woman;
Do not hurt me, pray, fair thing.

Hip: I'd sooner tear my eyes out, then consent
To do you any harm; though I was told
A Woman was my Enemy.

Dor: I never know what 'twas to be an Enemy,
Nor can I e'r prove so to that which looks
Like you: for though I have been charg'd by him
(Whom yet: I never disobey'd) to shun
Your presence Yet I'd rather die than lose it;
Therefore I hope you will not have the heart
To hurt me: though I fear you are a Man,
That dangerous thing of which I have been warn'd.
Pray tell me what you are?

Hip: I must confess, I was inform'd I am a Man,
But if I fright you, I shall wish I were
Some other creature. I was bid to fear you too. ⁽⁶⁾.

In portraying and educating his innocent characters, Dryden may have been influenced by Milton's Adam and Eve in "Paradise Lost" which he later adapted in his play, **The State of Innocence** (1677). There was a period of three months between publication of "Paradise Lost" and the first production of **The Enchanted Island**, during which Dryden might have read "Paradise Lost" in time to be influenced by it. Moore points out some of the similarities between Eve and the two innocent girls in the adaptation. Dorinda and Miranda, despite Prospero's warnings are curious to look at their "enemy". Milton's Eve is similarly rash and willing to face danger alone despite the warnings of Adam. Like Adam when he first sees Eve, Hippolito is attracted to Dorinda the first time he sees her. Unlike Dorinda, Eve runs away when she sees a man. Yet a little later she behaves more like Dorinda; she yields when Adam seizes her with his "gentle hand". Moore (1963: 72 - 73) adds that Milton's Adam and Dryden's Dorinda are ignorant of death until it is explained to them.

Milton's portrayal of the innocence and the gradual learning of Adam and Eve is understandable since he is dealing with the first parents in their prelapsarian state. Dryden's detachment and alienation of the basic human desires and feelings are proportionate with his concept of the imitation of Nature, that is his presentation of human nature off stage. This presentation of the development and alteration of human nature undergoes through the interaction between the individual and society is an approximate application of Robin's words on Aristotle's **Poetics**, which Dryden quotes in "preface to **Troilus and Cressida**":

If the roles be well considered, we shall find them to be made only to reduce nature into method, to trace her step - by - step, and not to suffer the least mark of her escape us: 'tis only by this that probability in fiction is maintained, which is the soul of poetry. (Kirsch, 1966: 146)

Such a process of alienation of human feelings might be also viewed as an exploitation of the inclinations of the seventeenth - century playgoers to watch the workings of love displayed on the stage. Moore reflects,

Practically all Restoration comedy (not to mention contemporary drama) depends upon the naturalness of Hippolito's....reaction. He resolves to increase his pleasure by loving not one woman, but all women . (Moore , 1963: 73)

The original and the adaptation seriously differ in as much as they reflect the interests and beliefs of the Renaissance and the late 17th - century people. The Shakespearean play for instance, reflects the Elizabethan deeply held beliefs in the power of magic and preternatural phenomena, Nor was that interest in the supernatural restricted to the folk traditions or the countryside. William Grace contends that the supernatural received the attention of scholars and statesmen. He goes on to remind us that James I, the successor of Queen Elizabeth I, wrote a scholarly treatise on demonology (Grace, 1964: 143). During the 56 years between **The Tempest** and its offshoot the English society had gone through a period of rationalism and scepticism which made it less sympathetic to the Elizabethan belief and enthusiasm for necromancy.

This fact reflects itself clearly in the Restoration revision of **The Tempest**, in which Shakespeare's protagonist undergoes substantial modification. The potent reformer who stands at the centre of **The Tempest**, manipulating the other characters becomes, in **The Enchanted Island**, impotent and unable to monitor or control events on his island.

Through "astrological prognostication" Prospero foresees the danger threatening Hippolito if he sees a woman:

By calculation of his birth I saw Death threat 'ning him, if, till some time were past, He should behold the face of any Woman.(II.ii. 8-9)

Unlike his Shakespearean counterpart, however, this Prospero fails to engineer a course of action that ensures the prevention of Hippolito's predicted end. His separating Hippolito from Miranda and Dorinda proves to be temporary and brings no positive results. His reliance on Miranda to reconcile Hippolito with Ferdinand shows a lack of insight into human nature. Her intervention provokes Ferdinand's jealousy instead of cooling it.

Prospero's magical art, in the adaptation, is no help to him in the face of destiny:

Alas! how in vain doth feeble Art Endeavour to resist the will of Heaven? He's gone forever All my designs are ruin'd and unravell'd by the blow no pleasure now is left but revenge (IV. iii. 28-33)

likewise, the Restoration Ariel , restricted by Hippolito's "ill Genius" (IV, iii. 51) is un-

able to save Hippolito. As a result, chaos, disorder and anarchy prevail on Prospero's island.

The impotence of the protagonist and his servant enables the Restoration writers to bring the Elizabethan play to the edge of tragedy, a genre which they, especially Dryden, rank higher to comedy. Playwrights who promoted the revival of classical dramatic theories (Nicoll, 1923: 164 - 65), Dryden and Davenant allow for Hippolito's death to have him undergo a cathartic experience similar to what Ariel in Shakespeare's play calls "sea - change." From his encounter with death, Hippolito grows "rich" and "strange" in the sense that he learns to "love" rather than to "lust". Learning his lesson, Hippolito, like the other lovers, is elevated to a higher level of awareness of his existence; and like those lovers, he is polished and ready to be introduced to the civilized world.

Clearly, Davenant and Dryden strip the tragic themes in the play of peril and impose a happy ending. The reason behind ending the play happily is most probably to please the seventeenth - century audience that prefer comedy to tragedy. One can learn this much from Dryden's defense of his practice of writing comedies, a genre which he personally does not think highly of. He explains:

The liking and the disliking of the people gives the play the denomination of good or bad, but does not really make or constitute it such. To please the people ought to be the poet's aim, because the plays are made for their delight ; but it does not follow that they are always pleased with good plays, or that the plays which please them are always good. The humour of the people is now for comedy, therefore, in hope to please them, I write comedies rather than serious plays: and so far their taste prescribes to me: but it does not follow from that reason that comedy is to be preferred before tragedy in its own nature;but the opinion of the people may alter, and in another age, or perhaps in this, serious plays may be set up above comedies. (Kirsch, 1966: 79)

Although this passage was published in 1668, a year after the adaptation, it accounts for Dryden's concession to the demands and taste of the Restoration audience in his early career. No wonder then that the adaptors impose the happy ending.

Writing for an audience which took pride in wit and taste. Davenant and Dryden despite their didactic moral undertones, are cynical about Shakespeare's admiration of the purity of the country and the innocence of the country people. The contrast in the adaptation is between Prospero's natural island and the Restoration "Town", as much as it is between the natural Hippolito and the experienced and sophisticated Ferdinand (Holland, 1959: 218). The Restoration poet - laureates show no interest in, rather laugh at, the natural man, who, for them, is no more than a country bumpkin who should learn the ways of the world before he can be admitted to the civ-

ilized, urban society. The play simultaneously implies a warning immorality and excessive emotions, which may lead to anarchy and social disorder.

Notes

1. The play was first performed by the Duke's Company on November 7, 1667. The Davenant - Dryden adaptation was entered in the Stationer's Register on January 8, 1670, and was not published again until 1701 when it was included in the folio edition of Dryden's plays. The 1701 edition was set from a copy of 1670 edition. cf. George Guffey, ed., **After the Tempest** (Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1969) , p. xx.
2. cf. William J. Grace, **Approaching Shakespeare** (New York: Basic Books Publishers, Inc. 1963) ,p. 143.
3. In "A Defence of any Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668), Dryden considers tragedy superior to comedy. Later in "Preface to **An Evenings Love**," he restates his idea with some elaboration: I think it, in its own nature, inferior to all sorts of dramatic writing. Low comedy especially requires, on the writer's part, much of conversation with the Vulgar : and much of ill nature in the observation of their follies. "A Defence " and "preface ..." are published in Arthur Kirsch, ed., **Literary Criticism of John Dryden** (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1966). Interest in tragedy versus comedy is also clear from the fact that they adapted more of Shakespeare's tragedies and tragicomedies than of his comedies. See Allardyce Nicoll, **A History of Restoration Drama 1600 - 1700** (Cambridge : Cambridge Univ: press, 1923), P. 162, and Holland, P. 214
4. **The Complete Works of Thomas Shadwell** (London : The Fortune Press, 1927) I, Civ.
5. cf. Hazelton Spencer, **Shakespeare Improved** (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1927) pp. 193 - 203.
6. William Davenant and John Dryden, "The Tempest", in **Five Restoration Adaptations**, ed. Christopher Spencer (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), pp. 140 - 143. All quotations from the adaptation are hereafter taken from this text.

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